

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5468

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, EI

SUBJECT: ALL PARTIES ACCEPT "FACTUAL POSITION" OF NI WITHIN UK

1. SPECKING IN DAIL MARCH 13 ON SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT, PM
COSGRAVE MADE FOLLOWING STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD:

"THE FACTUAL POSITION OF NORTHERN IRELAND IS THAT IT IS WITHIN
THE UNITED KINGDOM AND MY GOVERNMENT ACCEPT THIS AS A FACT. I
NOW THEREFORE SOLEMNLY REAFFIRM THAT THE FACTUAL POSITION OF
NORTHERN IRELAND WITHIN THE UNITED KINGDOM CANNNOT BE CHANGED
EXCEPT BY A DECISION OF THE MAJORITY OF THE PROPLE OF NORTHERN
IRELAND."

2. THIS STATEMENT WENT SLIGHTLY BEYOND SUNNINGDALE PARAGRAPH
FIVE IN THAT GOI SPECIFICALLY ACCEPTED "FACTUAL POSITION" OF
NI WITHIN UK. (AT SUNNINGDALE GOI HAD AGREED THAT NI STATUS
COULD NOT BE CHANGED WITHOUT CONSENT BUT HAD NOT SPELLED OUT
WHAT THE STATUS WAS.) MARCH 13 STATEMENT CLEARLY STRETCHES
IRISH CONSTITUTION TO THE LIMIT, AND LAWYERS MUST HAVE SPENT
A LONG TIME DECIDING WHETHER STATEMENT COULD BE MADE WITHOUT
VIOLATING ARTICLES TWO AND THREE OF CONSTITUTION. COSGRAVE'S
WHOLE POINT RESTED ON DISTINCTION BETWEEN "DE FACTO RECOGNITION,"
WHICH HE HAS NOW FORMALLY AFFIRMED; AND "DE JURE" RECOGNITION,
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WHICH CONSTITUTION DOES NOT PERMIT.

3. THIS SAME DISTINCTION ALLOWED FIANNA FAIL SPOKESMAN GEORGE COLLEY TO ACCEPT AND WELCOME COSGRAVE STATEMENT. (COLLEY WAS FILLING IN FOR PM LYNCH, WHO IS TRAVELING IN US.) THANKS TO THE DE FACTO/DE JURE DISTINCTION, COLLEY WAS ABLE TO SAY THAT GOI HAD NOW SUFFICIENTLY CLARIFIED SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT. IN LARGE MEASURE, THUS, DUBLIN IS BACK TO BIPARTISAN NI POLICY, WHICH HAD COLLAPSED TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN FIANNA FAIL VOTED AGAINST GOVERNMENT DURING NI DEBATE. (DUBLIN 280)

4. ISSUE WAS STRONGLY DIVISIVE WITHIN FIANNA FAIL. DUPUTY VIVION DE VALERA (SON OF EX-PRESIDENT) EXPRESSED AN ANGRY "RESERVATION" IN DAIL, AND MANY IN PARTY PROBABLY SIDE WITH HIM.

5. DUBLIN PRESS REPORTS FAVORABLE REACTION FROM LONDON AND FROM FAULKNER IN NORTH. LOYALISTS, HOWEVER, PREDICTABLY DESCRIBE COSGRAVE STATEMENT AS INSIGNIFICANT.

6. COMMENT: A DETERMINED CRITIC COULD SAY THAT COSGRAVE HAS MERELY ADMITTED WHAT HAS BEEN A FACT FOR FIFTY YEARS. THE ADMISSION WAS PAINFUL, HOWEVER, AS IT INVOLVED BURYING A LARGE PIECE OF THE REPUBLICAN MYTHOLOGY ON WHICH IRISH NATIONALISM WAS FOUNDED. THE METHOD OF BURIAL REQUIRED COURAGE AND INGENUITY, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT WAS IMPORTANT TO BRING FIANNA FAIL PARTY ALONG.

7. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE DAY WAS FIANNA FAIL ACCEPTANCE OF COSGRAVE STATEMENT. THERE WAS NEVER ANY REASON TO DOUBT THAT GOI WOULD STICK BY SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT, BUT THERE WAS PLENTY OF REASON TO WORRY ABOUT FIANNA FAIL POSITION.

8. AS A MATTER OF CURIOSITY FOR DEPT HISTORIANS, IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO CONSIDER WHETHER A FORMAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENT GRANTING DE FACTO RECOGNITION DOES NOT ALSO HAVE SOME DE JURE EFFECT.
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